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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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McKAY REORGANIZES FWS ACTIVITIES IN ALASKA

Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay today announced a reorganization of the Alaska activities of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Under this reorganization, Alaska activities will be divided into two major fields: Management of the commercial fisheries, and administration of the wildlife and game-fish resources.

In commenting on this realignment which will separate commercial fishing activities from sport fishery and wildlife management, Secretary McKay said, "This organizational approach reflects the nature and importance of the commercial fisheries functions and the unique responsibilities of the Service in Alaska but it does not represent any departure from regional organization in continental United States under which all functions are responsible to a single field director."

The salmon fisheries--the Territory's most important industry--suffered a sharp decline during the past 10 years in some parts of Alaska and a vigorous restoration program was inaugurated last year by Service Director John L. Farley. To put this program into operation, a special commercial fisheries administrator was appointed and the fisheries were managed apart from the regional office organization, resulting in greatly improved management of the resource. The new reorganization will formalize on a somewhat amplified basis the operating situation that prevailed in 1954 and will provide more direct lines of authority in the continuation of this salmon program.

Research on the Alaska commercial fisheries, which at present is being handled by the Seattle laboratory under the direct supervision of the Washington office, will be included in the commercial fisheries organization so that all functions concerned with the management of the commercial fisheries of the Territory will be handled by a single field organization.

Both the commercial fisheries and the wildlife units will have their own enforcement staffs, but personnel, equipment, and facilities will be shifted between the two organizations as seasonal and program demands require. One central unit in the Juneau headquarters office will provide fiscal, personnel and other administrative services to both organizations.

Donald L. McKernan has been named as Administrator of Alaska Commercial Fisheries. McKernan has been Assistant Director of the Service's Pacific Oceanic Fishery Investigations in Honolulu, Hawaii, for the past three years. Prior to that he served as Director of Research for the Oregon Fish Commission for six years. He also has had extensive experience in fishery research and administration with the Washington State Department of Fisheries where he directed research on the shellfish resources of the State.

In 1950, McKernan spent four months in Japan as a visiting fishery expert at the request of the Department of the Army. He is a graduate of the University of Washington and has completed more than two years of graduate work at that institution. He is the author of a number of publications on salmon and other Pacific coast fisheries.

McKernan is expected to report to his new post in Juneau some time in June. In the meantime, Seton H. Thompson, Chief of the Service's Branch of Alaska Fisheries, at Washington, D. C., who is now in Alaska, will begin the implementation of the new set-up.

Clarence J. Rhode, presently Regional Director of the Service in Alaska, will head the wildlife management unit with the title of Administrator, Alaska Wildlife Resources. Mr. Rhode will continue as a member and Executive Officer of the Alaska Game Commission.

Rhode has been with the Service continuously since July 1935 except for a three-year period from 1944 to 1947 when he did wartime work as a civilian pilot. He was appointed Regional Director for Alaska in April 1948. In December 1952 he received the Department of the Interior's highest honor, a Distinguished Service Award.

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